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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3043
INFO RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE IMMEDIATE 5691
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEANHA/FAA NATIONAL HQ WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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SUBJECT: GOI PRIORITIZES RECOVERY OF ADAM AIR BLACK BOXES

REF: JAKARTA 108

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Minister of Transportation Hatta Rajasa thanked the Ambassador and members of the USS Mary Sears search team for U.S. assistance in locating the wreckage of Adam Air Flight KI-574 on the floor of the Suluwesi Straits. Hatta said that the GOI's priority in terms of next steps is to recover the aircraft's black boxes. He asked for continued U.S. technical assistance to support these efforts, but suggested that the GOI and Adam Air would work out a way to share the cost of the operation. Earlier in the day, the Ambassador and the search team also briefed Indonesia Military (TNI) Joint Chief of Staff (Panglima) Air Vice Marshal Djoko Suyanto on the same topic. End Summary.

Recovering Black Boxes Top GOI Priority

¶2. (SBU) On January 30, the Ambassador and the USS Mary Sears search team briefed Minister of Transportation Hatta Rajasa on the successful U.S. Navy search for the wreckage and black boxes of missing Adam Air Flight KI-574. The team consisted of LCDR Charles Ehnes, Logistics Group, Western Pacific; U.S. Naval Oceanographic Singapore Office Director Thomas Cuff, and U.S. Naval Sea Systems Command Supervisor of Salvage Rick Thiel. Using sonar and computer generated charts, the team showed the Minister the location of two flight data recorders in approximately 2000 meters of water on the smooth, silted floor of the Suluwesi Straits. One flight recorder is apparently co-located with a piece of debris roughly one by five meters; the other is situated within a larger debris field several nautical miles away. They emphasized that Government of Indonesia (GOI) radar and water current data, as well as reports from locals in Suluwesi, had been critical to the success in locating the wreckage. The Ambassador explained that the search had taken some 20 days and cost the U.S. Government roughly US\$ 2 million.

¶3. (SBU) Hatta expressed gratitude for U.S. assistance in locating the aircraft wreckage. He said that the finding of only small pieces of debris was important information, as many families of the victims still believed the plane was largely intact on the bottom of the sea and that the wreckage and remains of victims could still be recovered. He explained that recovery of the two black boxes was now the GOI's highest priority in terms of next steps, and he asked whether it was feasible and how much it would cost.

¶4. (SBU) The Ambassador and the search team noted that a

number of private companies have the capacity to undertake deep water recovery operations. Their services would cost roughly \$50,000 per day, with the total cost for recovering the black boxes likely to reach \$1-3 million. Thiel estimated that it would likely take up to 10 days to recover the flight data recorders, but much would depend on whether their pingers were still active and if they were buried in debris. He added that with the pingers still active, a submersible remotely operated vehicle (ROV) could easily hone in on the exact locations of the flight data recorders.

No Request for USG Financial Assistance

15. (SBU) Hatta appeared to grasp the advantages of starting the recovery soon, and asked for continued U.S. assistance in the recovery operation, though he did not ask for U.S. financial assistance. Instead, he suggested that the GOI and Adam Air would discuss sharing the costs of the operation. Ambassador Pascoe said that National Transportation Safety Board investigators would remain available to further assist in the recovery and analysis of the black boxes, and that Thiel, Cuff and Ehnes would remain available to provide technical advice on the recovery operations. The three are scheduled to meet the Indonesian National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC) on January 31 to provide additional information on deep water recovery operations.

16. (SBU) Following the meeting, the Minister and the Ambassador met with members of the local press to give a brief description of the search for the Adam Air wreckage and the future steps. Both made it clear that decisions on the next steps and responsibility for the recovery of any parts of the wreckage were in the hands of the GOI.

17. (SBU) Earlier in the day, the Ambassador and the search team also briefed Indonesia Military (TNI) Joint Chief of Staff (Panglima) Air Vice Marshal Djoko Suyanto. He too expressed gratitude for U.S. assistance and cooperation with the TNI in the search for the wreckage, and indicated that the GOI would focus on recovering the flight data recorders from the crash.

PASCOE